



VALE OF GLAMORGAN
LOCAL ACCESS FORUM

ANNUAL REPORT
2008/09

Overleaf: Meander of the River Ely; footpath 29 Peterston mirrors the turns of the river as it follows the west bank.

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The Forum – A Brief History

The Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum has been in existence since October 2002 and continues to play an important role in advising the Vale of Glamorgan Council, the Countryside Council for Wales, Welsh Assembly Government and others as to the improvement of public access to land and, more recently, the coast, in the area.

The Forum is now in its third three year term, which began with the meeting on 28th January 2009. Current membership embraces a mixture of long- serving, and new, members, all of whom are keen to ensure that the previous work of the Forum continues to evolve.

The current Chairman and Vice-Chairman are Mr. Frank Coleman and Councillor Anthony Ernest respectively.

All meetings of the Forum are open to the public. Meetings are publicised by means of the Council's website.

Foreword

As Chairman and Secretary we are delighted to present the 7th Annual Report of the Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum.

An interesting year began with the Forum in June 2008 noting that the previous Chairman (Councillor Mike Harvey) had resigned and it was agreed that the former Deputy Chairman (Mr David Field) would take the Chair for the remainder of the previous Forum's term.

This Annual Report covers the latter part of the previous Forum's term of office and, obviously, the early life of the reappointed Forum. We both feel that the reappointment exercise has produced an excellent blend of returning, and new, members who have already begun to show their value to the Forum.

Those of you who have taken the opportunity to read previous Annual Reports will notice that this year's document is in a streamlined format designed to be more "user-friendly". It is to be hoped that this is welcomed by readers. Further details, including agendas, report and minutes, are available on the Council's website or on application to the Secretary.

It goes without saying that our appreciation to the Council's officers should be recorded. In particular, the invaluable support provided to the Forum by the following is much appreciated:

Chris Fray, Head of Economic Development and Leisure
Bob Guy, Operational Manager - Countryside and Economic Projects
Steve Latham, Country Parks and Commons Manager
Sandra Thomas, Public Rights of Way Assistant
Lorraine Pugh, Scrutiny and Committee Services Officer.

The Annual Report would not be complete without special mention of two individuals. Firstly, the former Deputy Chairman, Mr. David Field who served on the Forum from October, 2002 to November, 2008. Secondly, Mr. Chris Jones-Jenkins, the Council's former Public Rights of Way Officer, who left the employ of the Council in April 2009 after some 30 years service on Rights of Way matters. In addition to his work for the Council, Chris had provided support to the Forum since its inception in 2002.

Frank Coleman
Chairman

Jeff Wyatt
Secretary

Review of the year

June 2008

The Forum received an update on the position in relation to the preparation of the **Coastal Access Improvement Programme (CAIP)**.

An aspirational list of schemes considered achievable was submitted to the Forum, intended to act as the framework on which funding bids would be based for the five year programme. Whilst some concerns were expressed at the meeting regarding the somewhat late submission of the revised list of schemes, members were reassured to hear that the views of the Forum as a body were taken on board as well as those expressed by individual members and other consultees / stakeholders.

One area of concern expressed related to difficulties experienced generally in Cardiff with Associated British Ports (ABP) in obtaining access along the coast itself. It was felt that similar difficulties might well be encountered over time within Barry and further along the South Wales coastline. In the interest of co-operation, it was agreed that the Chairman of the National Access Forum would be contacted with a view to a co-ordinated approach being adopted regarding this matter.

Members noted that, with regard to the **LAF Volunteers Performance Indicators Survey** preparations had been made for a 5% random sample survey in addition to the regular survey (thereby increasing the annual sample rate to 10%). Whilst the signposting results did not differ widely from the results of the Ramblers Association survey, there was a wide discrepancy between the two surveys in respect of “easy to use” for which no reasons were immediately apparent.

It was agreed that a similar exercise be undertaken in the late summer / autumn of 2008 with a view to completing a regular Performance Indicator survey every year to supplement the Spring 5% return.

More recently! Details were presented in April 2009 of the 2008/09 surveys undertaken.

September 2008

Prior to the **September meeting**, members of the Forum undertook a site visit to view some of the **CAIP works on the cliff top between Penarth and Lavernock**. The meeting itself was held at the Visitors Centre, Cosmeston Lakes Country Park, Penarth.



Access for all at Cosmeston



Mile Road Bridge spanning West and East lakes at Cosmeston

In relation to the **Pont-y-Werin Bridge** project crossing the River Ely, the Forum was informed that planning permission for the scheme had been granted and that a Memorandum of Understanding between the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff Councils was being drafted.

The September meeting also saw the Forum welcome Mr. Gareth Simpson, the Chief Executive of **Valeways**. Mr. Simpson explained that, in addition to assisting the Council in maintaining countryside access, Valeways facilitated walking activities. Referring specifically to the cross-cutting relationship between Valeways and the Council he cited walking with vulnerable groups as an example of engagement with Social Services and, more generally, of helping push forward the health and wellbeing agenda. He also drew attention to the fact, however, that there was no longer an Access and Inclusion Officer in post at Valeways and that this was a direct consequence of the prevailing funding situation.



Selection of the leaflets created by Valeways in cooperation with the Rights of Way Team.

The point was accepted that the work of Valeways was underpinned by volunteers (some 400). Mr. Simpson identified difficulties in terms of short term funding and limited staff and transportation resources. He explained that the continuation of funding from the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) as being far from secure, drawing attention to the need for “fresh blood” and to difficulties relating to the ongoing recruitment of volunteers. The date of the Valeways AGM, at which Trustees were appointed, would be forwarded to the Members of the Forum, from whom expressions of interest were welcomed.

The Forum, fully appreciating the contribution made by Valeways agreed that the Leader of the Council be informed of its support of the organisation’s application for grant from the Council be wholeheartedly endorsed.

More recently! The Council’s Cabinet subsequently approved a grant of £30,000 per annum, payable annually in advance, for three years commencing 1st April 2009. The assistance is governed by a three year Service Level Agreement.



Fine open views from the high ground north of Bonvilston; part of the new Bonvilston route which will be available shortly

September 2008 (cont.)

Given that this constituted the last meeting of the previous Forum, a report was submitted outlining the various access **improvements delivered during its three year term of office**. These included

- the projects undertaken in partnership with Valeways
- the regular review of the Routine Maintenance Map with the Vale of Glamorgan Council performing consistently above the Welsh average as far as Performance Indicators were concerned
- a huge improvement in performance as regards the Definitive Map and the number of Diversion Orders made
- the award of funding in response to bids of £50k. for the Llansannor Equestrian Route and £100k. for stone stile preservation.

It had become necessary to revise the CAIP 2008 in light of the damage to the Penarth to Lavernock path as a consequence of inclement weather, the estimated costs of the work being £120-130k. as opposed to £50k. Discussions were ongoing with CCW regarding the possibility of additional funding being made available. During the course of such discussion, reference was made to the potential dangers to the public of unfenced areas along the cliff top on the Penarth to Lavernock path. Fencing had not been included in the remit of the works funded under the grant and it was generally accepted that there was an element of risk in walking / country pursuits. Nevertheless, it was agreed that the Secretary ask for the matter to be debated at the next meeting of the National Access Forum (NAF) with the aim of a statement being made which could be used as guidance throughout Wales.

More recently! The Chairman subsequently raised the matter at the National Conference where the general view taken was that this was more a matter for specific judgement in the local context by local authorities.

The Forum noted the allocation to the Vale of Glamorgan Council of just under £47,000 to be used for works outside the Coastal Zone which satisfied the criteria laid down in the ROWIP. It was noted that the Council had decided to utilise the whole of the funding to the review, and ultimate production, of the Definitive Map within the financial year. Should any extra funding be reallocated to the Council, it had been decided that a project of signposting paths from the road would be commenced. This reflected the fact that recent performance indicators had shown a deficiency in existing provision.

January 2009

January 2009 saw **the current Forum begin its life**. Several of the reappointed members had served on the Forum since its inception and were joined by a number of new members, resulting in a mix of interests and expertise.

All the members gave a brief outline to colleagues of their particular fields of interest and expertise. In addition, Sarah Tindal of the Countryside Council for Wales took the opportunity to outline her role and relationship with the Forum.

In order to assist members in settling in to the work of the Forum a presentation was given by Chris Jones-Jenkins, the Council's former Rights of Way Officer on the main achievements during the lifetime of the previous Forum.

In addition to the matters raised overleaf, Mr. Jones-Jenkins drew attention to the **Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)** which had been published in November 2007 and to some consequent changes in working practices. Particular reference was made to the development of the Assets Lifecycle Plan (derived from and now incorporated into the Highways Lifecycle Plan) which enabled more efficient estimates to be prepared in relation to infrastructure costs and value. The presentation contained slides showing Open Access land which, within the Vale, related purely to common land, the routine maintenance location map and Performance Indicator graphs relating to the ease of use and signposting of Public Rights Of Way (PROWs).

The focus then turned to the **Coastal Access Improvement Programme (CAIP)**, the slide presentation including maps of the area in question together with photographs illustrating conditions prior to and after improvement. Details of expenditure were also contained within the presentation, with some £131k. having been spent in 2007 and a breakdown of the £161k. allocation for 2008 although it was accepted that the 2008 schedule now required revision.



Phase one of the CAIP Lavernock Scheme providing a fully accessible path on the cliff top between Penarth and Lavernock

A number of procedural issues were addressed, not least **the appointment of Mr. Frank Coleman and Councillor Anthony Ernest as Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Forum** respectively.

Again, as a means of making the process as inclusive as possible, members of the Forum were invited to submit suggestions for revision of the Forum's Terms of Reference to ensure that they reflected relevant changes required since the introduction of model Terms of Reference.

An informative presentation was given on the **allocation of CAIP and ROWIP monies for 2009/10**. To accompany discussion on the allocation of funding under the CAIP, slides were displayed illustrating projected project costs (Part 1 of the CAIP), those relating to the practical improvements (Part 2) and a location map was circulated. Whilst the schemes were listed in the Council's priority order, Mr. Jones-Jenkins indicated that CCW had itself allocated a high priority to any schemes relating to the creation and improvement of new stretches of Coastal Path. Within the Vale these would include permissive paths at Gileston to Summerhouse Point, Cwm Colhuw, Cwm Nash to Dunraven and Dunraven to Ogmore.



Phase two of the CAIP Lavernock Scheme

Costs shown were estimates only and no timescale could yet be given for the submission of the bid. In response to the frustration expressed by members at the lack of detail, Ms. Tindal explained the processes by which applications were determined, stating that the position would be clearer by April.



Hilary Benn MP, with Councillor Anthony Ernest (Cabinet Member for Leisure & Tourism with responsibility for countryside and leisure) and Deputy Chair, Chris Fray (Head of Economic Development & Leisure) and Steve Latham (Country Parks & Commons Manager), visited the site in July 2009.

More recently! In April Ms. Tindal reiterated the points made at the previous meeting regarding the need for CCW to await Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) decisions regarding the overall funding available and referred also to potential additional Welsh European Funding Office (WEFO) funding. Whilst the Vale of Glamorgan was outside the area eligible for WEFO assistance, a successful bid in that area would mean a significant increase in the overall funding available which, in turn, would assist in allocating additional funding to those authorities outside the WEFO area.

Bob Guy announced at the next meeting of the LAF in July, 2009, that a formal offer in respect of CAIP was still awaited.

As regards the ROWIP, Mr. Jones-Jenkins reminded members that the entire allocation for 2008/09 had been expended on staffing and production costs associated with the review of the Definitive Map. The current year's funding would, however, be focussed on more practical works. Works anticipated included 3 boardwalks in the Cowbridge / Aberthin area and another in Llancadle (c. £25k.) and signposting (c. £10k.) to address the lack of signage evidenced in the last footpath survey. Should funding be available, additional works could include a contribution to fencing in the Dinas Powys area and further work on the Definitive Map.

More recently! An update in respect of the ROWIP programme was submitted to the LAF in April, 2009.

Membership Details

Name	Date Appointed	Brief Background Details
Mr. Frank Coleman	28 th January, 2009	<p>Previously Operational Manager with the Vale of Glamorgan Council, having responsibility for a wide range of countryside and recreational projects (including serving the Forum).</p> <p>Enjoy walking, particularly keen to see a balance between conserving the outstanding natural environment of the area and enabling people to enjoy it more.</p>
Councillor Anthony Ernest	28 th January, 2009	<p>Councillor for many years on both Penarth Town and the Vale of Glamorgan Councils. Cabinet Member for Tourism and Leisure. Former Chairman of the Cosmeston Lakes Country Park Committees. Enthusiastic ornithologist and served for 28 years in the Auxiliary Coastguard Service. Founder Chairman of Penarth RNLi Station Committee.</p>
Mr. G.D. Cubbin	28 th January, 2009	<p>Former teacher of geography and physical education; service on the Principality Bulding Society's Member Forum; worked at an Environmental Studies Centre preparing landuse and footpath maps for school field trips. Interests walking the coastal footpaths. On a local level, I have campaigned for better access to Newton Burrows from Ogmore by Sea and tried to instigate 'clean up' projects.</p>
Mrs. Annie Duddridge	8 th July, 2009	<p>Worked at the Cardiff and Vale Coalition of Disabled People (CVCDP) since 2005. As Outreach Manager I try to ensure</p>

		<p>the views of disabled people are taken to the appropriate arenas. One of my “missions” and a fundamental ethos of CVCDP is to promote the message of the Social Model of Disability out to as many people as possible, making it a building block of understanding between non-disabled and disabled people.</p> <p>I facilitate the CVCDP Access Group that consists of disabled residents from Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan.</p>
Mrs. V.M. Hartrey	12 th February, 2003 *	As a walker, I know the footpath network of the Vale well, and am keen to see improved links and access.
Mr. J.J. Herbert	9 th November, 2005 *	<p>Interests in off-road motor sport, stage rallying, and MSA safety radio operation.</p> <p>Member of the Green Lane Association (GLASS), campaigning for preservation of existing roads under threat of closure. Working with WAG on initiatives to manage a network of sustainable roads, and to find ways to control illegal “off-roading”. Very keen to progress the coastal footpath.</p> <p>Passionate about wanting to see fair and equitable access for all to the countryside where it is legal, practical and sustainable.</p>
Mrs. H. March	29 th October, 2002 *	Lifelong connection with agriculture, and participation in country based community activities in the Vale of Glamorgan.
Mr. H.S. McMillan	9 th November, 2005 *	<p>Undertake outdoor activities such as hill and mountain walking, long distance trekking both at home and abroad, canoeing on Welsh rivers and cycling both on and off road.</p> <p>Direct interest in the sea and the coast, which is currently satisfied by walking coastal paths around the UK</p>

		and being the Chairman of the Barry Dock Lifeboat Management Group. Flat Holm Island is very special to me and I spend as much time as possible on the Island working on renovation or improvement projects.
Mr. N. Moss	9 th November, 2005 *	Interested in increasing responsible use of rights of way for purposes of transport, recreation and health, particularly for deprived areas and groups. Relevant experience includes: walking: local, long distance and organised groups; path maintenance; land management and access responsibilities for nature reserve; cycling.
Mr. M. Parry	28 th January, 2009	Experience includes: proven track record of logical and disciplined working as a team; commitment and flexibility of time to address the programme commitment; access experience from a user's and landowner's (outside the Vale) point of view; close ties to the Vale community; experience of Council workings; personal and professional experience of relevant issues with a wide range of organisations and individuals.
Ms. A. Phillips	28 th January, 2009	Working with the Council and other partners on the development of the Local Authority Partnership Agreement (Physical Activity); advisor on the local Walking for Health programme and a trained Walking for Health walk leader; member of the Changing Lives (Mentro Allan) project steering group working with black and minority ethnic groups to encourage physical activity in the outdoor natural environment. Passionate about making the leisure opportunities in the Vale countryside and coast available to all.

Mr. R. Pittard	29 th October, 2002 *	Vice President of Youth Hostels Association Cymru / Wales; Chairman of YHA Cymru / Wales Countryside Committee; Member of National Access Forum Wales and Defence Estates Access Focus Group; Council Member of Council for National Parks Wales Environment Link and Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales; Board Member of Rail Future and observer to SEWTA; YHA representation to Environmental Groups in Wales and also a member of YHA's National Countryside / Environment Advisory Group.
Mr. R. Simpson	29 th October, 2002 *	Member of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales. Love and appreciation of the countryside, and in my opinion, nothing can compare to the varied rural landscape of the Vale of Glamorgan, from its coastal belt to the foothills inland.
Mrs. L. Stuart	28 th January, 2009	Former Councillor for the parish of Sully and Lavernock, and sometime Chair. Currently Chair of the Older People's Forum ('OPF') Health Group and a member of the OPF Age Discrimination Group and OPF Executive. This has given me an insight into the Forum as a structure and of voluntary work as a whole. Enjoy nothing more than a stroll in the countryside .
Mr. R. Traherne	29 th October, 2002 *	Owns and manages an agricultural estate, consisting of a. "home farm", tenanted ground and farms, the Downs Common and 100 acres of forestry. Considerable experience of "rights of ways" and "access issues" Keen walker, horse rider and interested in conservation and all aspects of the rural economy. Welcomes walkers, riders, metal detectors, fishermen and many other interest groups.

Mrs. V. Warlow	9 th November, 2005 *	Management Committee of Valeways; developed the Pilot Walking for Health Project in the Vale of Glamorgan which aims to be fully inclusive, promote the Countryside Code and an understanding of Public Access and Rights of Way within the Vale; keen walker, active member of various groups; member of The Woodland Trust.

* Reappointed on 28th January, 2009.

Terms of Reference

Set out below are the Terms of Reference under which the Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum operates. These were broadened at the meeting of the LAF held on 1st April, 2009 to take account of coastal access issues and particular matters identified by the Chairman (these additions being shown in bold type below).

Members of the LAF reaffirmed the Terms of Reference as reproduced below at their most recent meeting (8th July, 2009).

Title

1. The Local Access Forum shall be known as the Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum.

Roles and Responsibilities

2. The function of the Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum is to provide advice to the relevant local authorities, the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and others as appropriate as to the improvement of public access to land in the area for the purposes of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of the area in ways which take account of land management, social, economic, environmental and educational interests.
3. The Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum will fulfil this role by advising on issues of particular local relevance, including:
 - (a) supporting the implementation of the new right of access to open countryside **and the coast**;
 - (b) improving the rights of way **and coastal access** networks; and
 - (c) developing recreation and access strategies that cater for everyone.
4. The Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum will work to:
 - (a) develop a constructive and inclusive approach to the improvement of recreational access to the countryside **and to the coast**;
 - (b) **contribute to, and help facilitate, the work of the Vale of Glamorgan Council and its partners where appropriate**;
 - (c) respect local circumstances and different interests whilst operating within national guidance;
 - (d) provide advice on issues of principle and good practice;
 - (e) engage in constructive debate and seek consensus wherever possible; and

- (f) where consensus is not possible, make clear the nature of differing views, and suggest how they might be resolved.

Membership

- 5. The membership will include:
 - (a) a Chair and Deputy Chair elected in accordance with the LAF regulations;
 - (b) a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 20 other Members, which must include a balanced representation of
 - (i) recreational access users and
 - (ii) landowners and occupiers – together with representation of other interests especially relevant to the area.
- 6. The membership will:
 - (a) be balanced to avoid dominance by any single interest group;
 - (b) represent a cross-section of interests in the area; and
 - (c) live or work within the area or have a sound knowledge of the area.
- 7. Members will be expected to:
 - (a) adhere to the sections relating to LAFs in the CROW Act and regulations and these Terms of Reference;
 - (b) show commitment to achieving the aims of the Local Access Forum through constructive working with other Members;
 - (c) be able to devote the necessary time to attend meetings and to network outside meetings;
 - (d) have sufficient experience of access to the countryside **and coast** in the local areas to be able to make an informed and constructive contribution to improving access provision; and
 - (e) be capable of working with a wide range of interest groups.

Administration

Secretariat

- 8. The Vale of Glamorgan Local Access Forum will have a Secretary appointed by the appointing authority who will be responsible for:
 - (a) providing support to the Chair of the Forum;
 - (b) ensuring that the Forum is set up and run according to the CROW Act, Local Access Forum regulations and these Terms of Reference;
 - (c) managing any resources dedicated to its work;
 - (d) arranging and promoting meetings, including arranging the delivery of papers and information to Forum Members and the public;
 - (e) producing minutes of Forum meetings.

Meetings

9. Meetings will be held at least two times a year, and more frequently as and when necessary, to be agreed by the LAF and the appointing authority.
10. Meetings agendas will be agreed between the Chair, the Deputy Chair and the Secretary – although any Member may suggest agenda items for consideration.
11. Meetings will be advertised in advance and the minutes published.
12. The Chair will invite observers / advisors to the meeting when appropriate.
13. Observers / advisors will be able to contribute to the proceedings at the discretion of the Chair.
14. One representative of each of the Countryside Council for Wales and the National Assembly for Wales and any officer of the appointing authority will automatically have observer status.
15. The LAF will appoint, if desirable, Local Access Forum committees and / or Sub Groups.
16. The LAF will appoint the Chairman and agree the Terms of Reference of committees / sub groups.
17. All meetings of the LAF will be held in public. However, the person presiding, following a request from a Member or Members, may decide that the public should be barred for particular items for reasons of personal privacy or commercial confidentiality.
18. Should a Member of the Forum feel he / she might have a conflict of interest relating to a specific agenda item, such an interest should be declared.

Officer Support

Secretary

Jeff Wyatt, Operational Manager (Democratic Services), Directorate of Legal, Public Protection and Housing Services, The Vale of Glamorgan Council Civic Offices, Holton Road, Barry, CF63 4RU

Chris Fray, Head of Economic Development and Leisure, The Vale of Glamorgan Council, Dock Office, Subway Road, Barry, CF63 4RT

Bob Guy, Operational Manager - Countryside and Economic Projects, Dock Office, Subway Road, Barry, CF63 4RT

Steve Latham, Country Parks and Commons Manager, Cosmeston Lakes Country Park, Lavernock Road, Penarth, CF64 5UY

Sandra Thomas, Public Rights of Way Assistant, The Vale of Glamorgan Council, Dock Office, Subway Road, Barry, CF63 4RT

Lorraine Pugh, Directorate of Legal, Public Protection and Housing Services, The Vale of Glamorgan Council Civic Offices, Holton Road, Barry, CF63 4RU



*Looking westward from Col-huw beach,
Llantwit Major on a Winter day.*